

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a mask blank having a thin film for forming a mask pattern on a substrate, ~~wherein the thin film is formed by a sputtering method using~~ comprising:

forming a thin film on the substrate by sputtering a sputtering target containing comprising metal and silicon, and to deposit the thin film onto the substrate by reactive sputtering;

wherein the sputtering target has a hardness of 900HV or more in Vickers' hardness.

2. (Original) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein the sputtering target has the hardness of 980HV or more in Vickers' hardness.

3. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein the thin film is formed by a reactive sputtering method in an atmosphere ~~containing~~ comprising oxygen and/or nitrogen.

4. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein ~~the sputtering target contains the silicon of 70 to 95 atm%~~ silicon is from 70 mol% to 95 mol% of the sputtering target.

5. (Previously Presented) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein the thin film is a light semi-transmitting film and the mask blank is a phase shift mask blank.

6. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, ~~wherein a metal film is formed on the thin film~~ further comprising:

forming a metal film on the thin film.

7. (Previously Presented) A method for manufacturing a transfer mask by patterning the thin film of the mask blank manufactured by the manufacturing method of claim 1.

8. (Currently Amended) A sputtering target for manufacturing a mask blank ~~containing by a reactive sputtering method, the sputtering target comprising metal and silicon, wherein a hardness of the target is~~ and having a hardness of 900 HV or more in Vickers' hardness, wherein silicon is from more than 80 mol% to 95 mol% of the sputtering target.

9. (Currently Amended) The sputtering target for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 8, wherein the sputtering target ~~contains~~ comprises a metal silicide compound.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a phase shift mask blank, comprising:

by sputtering a target containing metal and silicon in an atmosphere containing comprising at least one of oxygen and/or and nitrogen using a target containing metal and silicon to deposit a light semi-transmitting film containing comprising metal, silicon, and at least one of oxygen and/or and nitrogen on a transparent substrate,

wherein by using based on a correlation that exists between the light semi-transmitting film and a rate of generating defects, between a rate of generating defects in the light semi-transmitting film and a hardness of the target where an increase in the degree of hardness of the target correlates to a decrease in the rate of generating defects, the light semi-transmitting film is deposited, using the with the target having a predetermined hardness from

900HV to 1400HV in Vickers' hardness so that the rate of generating the defects is set to be a desired value or less.

12. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein silicon is more than 80 mol% of the sputtering target.

13. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein silicon is from more than 80 mol% to 92 mol% of the sputtering target.

14. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein silicon is from more than 80 mol% to 95 mol% of the sputtering target.

15. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, further comprising:

sintering metal silicide and silicon powders to form the sputtering target.

16. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 15, wherein sintering is performed at a heating temperature of 1300°C or less.

17. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, further comprising:

cleaning the thin film after the thin film is formed.

18. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, further comprising:

cleaning the thin film after the thin film is formed, wherein the thin film is a light semi-transmitting film.

19. (New) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein:

the thin film is a light semi-transmitting film, the light semi-transmitting film has a transmittance of 9% to 20% for an exposure wavelength; and

the mask blank is a phase shift mask blank.